

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 00634 01 OF 02 131946Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /070 W
-----132008Z 033407 /43

R 131842Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9463
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 00634

E. O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, UK
SUBJECT: UNION LEADERS CRITICIZE LABOR PARTY LEADER-
SHIP: A STRAW IN THE WIND OF CHANGE?

REF: (A) LONDON 20060 (76); (B) LONDON 2038L (76)

SUMMARY: LEADERS OF BRITISH TRADE UNIONS--IN THE WORDS OF ONE OF THEM--"HAVE FIRED A WARNING SHOT ACROSS THE BOW" OF THE LABOR PARTY'S LEFT-WING LED NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. AT A MEETING OF 33 UNIONS CALLED TO CONSIDER PARTY FINANCES, MANY OF THEIR LEADERS STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE NEC FOR ITS CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON MANY CRITICAL ISSUES AND ITS FAILURE TO COUNTER EXTREME LEFTIST PENETRATION OF THE PARTY (REFTEL A). TOM BRADLEY, AN MP AND TRADE UNIONIST AND A FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY, SAID HE WAS "MOST ENCOURAGED" BY THE STRONG STAND AGAINST THE NEC LEADERSHIP, BUT DAVID BASNETT, A TOP TUC LEADER, INSISTS THAT IT DOES NOT REPRESENT A CALL TO ARMS BY UNIONS AGAINST THE NEC. JACK JONES WAS PRESENT BRIEFLY AND EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR UNITY. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR HOW DEEP TRADE UNION

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 00634 01 OF 02 131946Z

CRITICISM OF THE NEC GOES, BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE GROWING RESTIVENESS AMONG THE UNIONS WITHIN THE PARTY ABOUT THE UNSEEMLY IMAGE OF A PARTY EXECUTIVE AT ODDS WITH ITS OWN GOVERNMENT. THE NEC CANNOT SIMPLY IGNORE THE WARNING FROM THE UNIONS LEST IT RISK A MUCH SHARPER CHALLENGE TO ITS LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. 33 TRADE UNIONS SENT REPRESENTATIVES JANUARY 11 TO A MEETING CALLED TO CONSIDER THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL NEEDS (A 50,000 POUNDS STERLING APPEAL FUND TARGET SET LAST FALL NETTED ONLY 20,000 POUNDS STERLING), AND A LONG-TERM PROGRAM OF INCREASED FINANCIAL SUPPORT, INVOLVING STAGED PER CAPITA INCREASES FROM THE CURRENT ANNUAL 21 PENCE TO 32 PENCE BY 1980. THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL NEEDS RESULT FROM A COMBINATION OF COST INFLATION, PREVIOUS ANNUAL DEFICITS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE WHICH MAY FLOW FROM DEVOLUTION LEGISLATION AND DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. THE UNIONS, OF COURSE, ARE THE MAJOR SOURCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PARTY, AND A MAJORITY OF THE UNION REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE THEIR CRITICISMS AND CONCERN ABOUT THE NEC LEADERSHIP (WHOSE LEFT-WING ALSO INCLUDES TRADE UNIONISTS LIKE EMLYN WILLIAMS OF THE MINERS AND ALEX KITSON OF THE TRANSPORT WORKERS).

3. JOE GORMLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINERS, WAS ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE CRITICS OF THE NEC'S CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT ON A NUMBER OF POLICY ISSUES (SUCH AS EXPENDITURE CUTS) WHICH HE SAID MAKES IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE UNIONS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE PARTY. HE ALSO EXPRESSED VERY STRONG CONCERN ABOUT THE INFILTRATION OF THE PARTY BY EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TROTSKYIST "MILITANT FACTION" (REFTEL A). HE LATER TOLD US THAT IF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP DID NOT TAKE NOTE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 00634 01 OF 02 131946Z

OF THESE TRADE UNION ANXIETIES, THERE COULD BE A REAL "BUST-UP" AT THE NEXT LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE. SIMILAR CRITICISM AND DEMANDS FOR NEC ACTION ON THE UNDERHILL REPORT CONCERNING EXTREME LEFT-WING PENETRATION OF THE PARTY WERE VOICED BY OTHER TRADE UNION LEADERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING, INCLUDING THOSE FROM CONSTRUCTIO POST-OFFICE, ENGINEERING, MUNICIPAL AND PROFESSIONAL, AND OTHER UNIONS. AS DEREK GLADWIN, AN IMPORTANT REGIONAL LEADER OF THE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION TOLD US: "WE WERE FIRING A WARNING SHOT ACROSS THE NEC'S BOW. SURE, EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO HIS SAY, BUT WHEN THE NEC SPENDS TIME OPENLY CRITICIZING WHAT AMOUNTS TO AN AGREEMENT (THE SOCIAL CONTRACT) BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TUC, WE HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE UNIONS ARE SIMPLY AN OPEN CASH REGISTER WHENEVER THE PARTY SHEDS BLOOD."

4. JACK JONES, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION, AND CURRENTLY THE TUC'S "MR.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 00634 02 OF 02 131949Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /070 W
-----132007Z 033427 /43

R 131842Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9464
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 00634

BIG," WAS MORE DISCREET DURING HIS BRIEF ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETING. WHILE NOT OPENLY ATTACKING THE NEC, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN THE NEC AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE DAMAGING THE PARTY AND ENDANGERED ITS CHANCES IN THE NEXT BY-ELECTION WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN STECHFORD TO FILL THE SEAT VACATED BY ROY JENKINS. JONES MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR UNITY.

5. IMPLICATIONS DRAWN FROM THE MEETING VARY. TOM BRADLEY, ON THE RIGHT OF THE PARTY AND TRADE UNIONS, WAS "MOST ENCOURAGED" AND PLEASED AT THE HARDENING OF TRADE UNION ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. HE SEES THEM AS CLOSE TO A TURNING POINT. OTHER RIGHT WING TRADE UNIONISTS, SUCH AS JOHN SPELLAR OF THE ELECTRICIANS UNION WHICH IS LED BY FRANK CHAPPLE, VIEW THE MEETING AS REPRESENTING AN IMPORTANT SHIFT BY THE TRADE UNIONS WHICH THE NEC CAN IGNORE ONLY AT ITS PERIL. SPELLAR, AN ASTUTE YOUNG OBSERVER, RECOGNIZES THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR INTERNAL REASONS FOR UNIONS TO DISLODGE SOME OF THEIR OWN LEFT-WING REPRESENTATIVES ON THE NEC (WITNESS EMLYN WILLIAMS AND ALEX KITSON)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 00634 02 OF 02 131949Z

BUT CONSIDERS UNIONS COULD FIND IT MUCH EASIER TO VOTE OFF THE COMMITTEE SOME OF THE LEFT-WING WOMEN'S SECTION MEMBERS SUCH AS JOAN MAYNARD AND JUDITH HART.

6. ALLEN FISHER, A LEFT-OF-CENTER LEADER OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND HIMSELF A FREQUENT CRITIC OF THE GOVERNMENT ON EXPENDITURE CUTS, ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NEC AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS LED TO CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND CONCERN BY THE RANK AND FILE TRADE UNIONISTS. HE IS CONFIDENT HOWEVER THAT THE NEC WILL MODIFY ITS BEHAVIOUR TO MEET ITS CRITICS, ALTHOUGH MAINLY BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF PROVOCATIVE RESEARCH PAPERS WHICH--THOUGH REPRESENTING LONG RANGE PARTY GOALS--VARY SHARPLY FROM CURRENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES. DAVID BASNETT, THE MODERATE BUT NORMALLY CAUTIOUS LEADER OF THE GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION, WHICH WAS REPRESENTED AT THE MEETING BY THE MORE OUTSPOKEN GLADWIN, HAS TENDED TO DOWNPLAY ANY SIGN OF SCHISM BETWEEN THE UNIONS AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. HE INSISTS THAT THE MEETING DID NOT REPRESENT A CALL TO ARMS AGAINST THE NEC AND REMARKED THAT IT WAS ATTENDED MAINLY BY "SECOND ECHELON" REPRESENTATIVES.

7. COMMENT: THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNIONS' "WARNING SHOT" IS NOT YET CERTAIN. CLEARLY, THEIR WARNING DOES NOT REPRESENT A "REVOLT" AGAINST THE NEC, BUT RIGHT-WING PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO ENLIST INFLUENCE IN THE PARTY ARE HEARTENED. MODERATES ARE STILL UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE UNION LEADERS' CONCERN WILL BE TRANSLATED INTO MORE SPECIFIC VOTING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE UNION MEMBERS OF THE NEC OR INTO VOTES IN THIS YEAR'S NEC ELECTIONS. AT THE VERY LEAST, LABOR MODERATES BELIEVE THE EVENTS OF TUESDAY WILL CONSTRAIN THE NEC IN THE FUTURE AND INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE UNDERHILL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 00634 02 OF 02 131949Z

REPORT WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVORABLY. AT BEST, THESE EVENTS COULD RESULT IN THE REPLACEMENT OF UP TO TWO OF THE EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS ELECTED FROM THE WOMEN'S SECTION LATER THIS YEAR. IT DOES NOT SEEM TO US THAT THE WARNING HERALDS THE TRADE UNIONS' RETURN TO THE VERY CONSERVATIVE POSTURE WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE ARTHUR DEAKINS, ERNIE BEVIN ERA, BUT THE TUC PENDULUM HAS IN FACT BEEN SWINGING TOWARD THE RIGHT IN RECENT YEARS, SUGGESTING THAT TUESDAY'S OUTPOURING OF

GRIEVANCE IS MORE THAN AN ISOLATED EVENT.

ARMSTRONG

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, MEETINGS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON00634
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770013-0930
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770156/aaaabwjj.tel
Line Count: 227
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: af1605da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 LONDON 20060, 77 LONDON 2038
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3607928
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNION LEADERS CRITICIZE LABOR PARTY LEADER- SHIP: A STRAW IN THE WIND OF CHANGE?
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/af1605da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009